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1903

THE STORY OF  
CUPID & PSYCHE
TRANSLATED FROM THE
LATIN OF APULEIUS  BY
CHARLES STUTTAFORD
ILLUSTRATED BY JESSIE
MOTHERSOLE   

LONDON : PUBLISHED BY DAVID
NUTT  AT THE SIGN OF THE
PHOENIX, LONG ACRE  MDCCCCIII

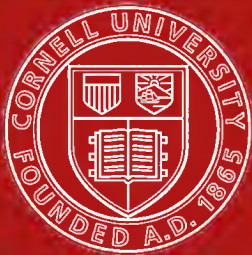
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CUPID & PSYCHE *So So*

775 G. 140



Psyche in the Valley of Flowers. (Frontispice.)

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LONDON & EDINBURGH

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TO
HIS WIFE
THIS RENDERING OF AN OLD STORY
IS
DEDICATED
BY
THE TRANSLATOR

ILLUSTRATIONS

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TO PSYCHE §

*O Goddess ! hear these tuneless numbers, wrung
By sweet enforcement and remembrance dear,
And pardon that thy secrets should be sung,
Even in thine own soft-conched ear :
Surely I dreamt to-day, or did I see
The winged Psyche with awaken'd eyes ?
I wandered in a forest thoughtlessly,
And, on a sudden, fainting with surprise,
Saw two fair creatures, couched side by side
In deepest grass, beneath the whispering roof
Of leaves and trembled blossoms, where there ran
A brooklet, scarce espied :
'Mid hush'd, cool-rooted flowers fragrant-eyed,
Blue, silver-white, and budded Tyrian,
They lay calm-breathing on the bedded grass ;
Their arms embraced, and their pinions too ;
Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade adieu
As if disjoined by soft-handed slumber,
And still past kisses to outnumber
At tender eye-dawn of aurorean love :
The winged boy I knew ;
But who wast thou, O happy, happy dove ?
His Psyche true !*

*O latest-born and loveliest vision far
Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy !
Fairer than Phoebe's sapphire-region'd star,
Or Vesper, amorous glow-worm of the sky ;*

*Fairer than these, though temple thou hast none,
Nor altar heap'd with flowers ;
Nor Virgin-choir to make delicious moan
Upon the midnight hours ;
No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet
From chain-swung censer teeming ;
No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat
Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.
O brightest! though too late for antique vows,
Too, too late for the fond believing lyre,
When holy were the haunted forest boughs,
Holy the air, the water, and the fire ;
Yet even in these days so far retired
From happy pieties, thy lucent fans,
Fluttering among the faint Olympians,
I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspired.
So let me be thy choir, and make a moan
Upon the midnight hours !
Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet
From swung censer teeming :
Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat
Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.*

*Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane
In some untrodden region of my mind,
Where branched thoughts, new-grown with pleasant
pain,
Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind :*

*Far, far around shall those dark-clustered trees
Fledge the wild-ridged mountains steep by steep ;
And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds and bees,
The moss-lain Dryads shall be lull'd to sleep ;
And in the midst of this wide quietness
A rosy sanctuary will I dress
With the wreath'd trellis of a working brain,
With buds, and bells, and stars without a name.
With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign,
Who breeding flowers, will never breed the same :
And there shall be for thee all soft delight
That shadowy thought can win,
A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,
To let the warm Love in !*

JOHN KEATS.

INTRODUCTION 50



LUCIUS APULEIUS

was born about the year A.D. 114, at Madaura, a city on the borders of Numidia and Gætulia, which must not be con-

fused with the Numidian town of the same name, which is now Ayedrah. His father, who was an Italian, had settled at Madaura, where he attained high office and amassed a considerable fortune. He sent his son to school at Carthage, then the second city of the world, and dying, bequeathed him his fortune. Lucius Apuleius then started on his travels, and spent the next ten years of his life wandering through Greece, Italy, and the East, studying rhetoric, philosophy, and especially magic. At the age of twenty-five he returned to Madaura where he appears to have practised as a barrister.

Love of knowledge soon drove him again from home, and he started for Alexandria. The cold and fatigue of travelling made him

break off his journey at Tripolis, where he met and married a wealthy widow, considerably older than himself. He was accused by her relatives of having gained her affections through magic, but was acquitted after having delivered the "Apology" that has come down to us. Soon afterwards he went to Carthage, where he attained the greatest renown, both as a pleader and as a teacher of rhetoric. Here he spent the rest of his life, dying in the year A.D. 191, about the age of sixty-six.

Of his numerous writings, all that have come down to us, are "The God of Socrates," "The Florida," "The Apology," "The Doctrines of Plato," "Description of the World," "Asclepius," and the romance "The Metamorphoses," or, as it is sometimes called, with very little reason, "The Golden Ass."

The story of "The Metamorphoses" tells how a young man is turned by magic into an ass. With the loss of his human form he loses his power of speech, but retains his human intelligence. In the course of his adventures he
xvi falls

falls into the hands of a band of robbers, who also capture a beautiful maiden. When setting out to seek further booty, the robbers leave the maiden and the ass in the charge of a half-tipsy old woman. This old hag, in order to divert the maiden's thoughts from the evils of her situation, tells her the following story.

CHAPTER I §



NCE UPON A TIME

there lived in a certain land a king and queen who had three daughters of rare loveliness. Although the two elder of these sisters were very beautiful, yet it was within the power of human tongue to sound their charms; but the beauty of the youngest was so marvellous and dazzling that it outstripped all human praise and made it halt behind her. The dwellers in this land and many strangers, drawn by the rumour of this marvel, came in great numbers to gaze, and gazing were struck into such wondering admiration that they straightway fell down and worshipped her, as if she were Venus herself. Already the report was spreading through the neighbouring cities and surrounding lands that the Goddess to whom the azure deep gave birth, and who was reared among the foam of sea-spray, had deigned to lay aside her divinity and mix with mortal beings, or, at least, that, by a new effect of the creative influence of the stars, the earth, and not the sea, had brought forth a second Venus,

with her same flower of virginity. This belief spread widely day by day, from neighbouring islands to countries more remote, until her fame had encircled all the world. Now multitudes of men, by long marches and by ploughing the deep seas, travelled hither to behold the glorious wonder of the age. None journeyed now to Paphos or to Cnidos, nor even sailed to Cythera to worship at the shrine of Venus. Her sacrifices were suspended, her temples dishonoured, her thrones trampled under foot, her ceremonies neglected, her statues uncrowned, and her solitary altars grimed with cold ashes. It was to a mortal maiden they offered up their prayers, through the beauty of a mortal face they adored the divinity of the mighty Goddess ; when, in the morning, this maiden issued forth, with victims and with feasts they worshipped the name of the absent Venus, and as she passed through the streets, the people, gathering together in crowds, cast sprays and garlands before her feet.

When the true Venus saw the sacred honours, due to her, paid without stint to a maiden, fierce rage seized upon her and,
4 trembling

trembling with passion, thus she debated with herself. “Is it for me, the first parent of all Nature, the prime and origin of all the world’s elements; is it for me, Venus, the great Mother, to share my honours with a mortal? Shall my fame, whose foundations are in heaven, be profaned by the mean creatures of earth? Shall I, forsooth, rest content with the divided honours of an attenuated godhead? Is a maiden, by her nature foredoomed to death, to represent me on earth? Was it for this that the shepherd, whose judgment great Jupiter upheld, preferred my charms before those of the two puissant Goddesses? But whoever she be that has usurped my honours, she shall not rejoice for long; soon shall she curse the insolence of her encroaching beauty.”

§☛ Forthwith she calls to her side her winged son, the boy who with his waywardness and evil habits mocks all public order, who, armed with torch and arrow, careers at night through strange houses, breaking with impunity all marriage-bonds, doing all that is evil and

nought that is good ; whom, though raging with inborn lust, she excites still further by her words. Now she brings him to the city and shows him Psyche, for that was the maiden's name. Trembling with passionate indignation, she tells him how this maiden's beauty rivalled her own. "I pray you," says she, "by the bonds of filial love, by your arrows' pleasant wounds, by your torch's honied burning ; avenge your mother, ay, avenge her to the full, punish well this rebel beauty, do this my one desire. Let her burn with insatiate love for the meanest of mankind ; one wanting both birth and place, one damned by Fortune, one so mean that in all the world his fellow cannot be found."

§ Thus saying, with half-opened mouth, she showers long and fervent kisses on her son, and then seeks the nearest shore of the recoiling sea, where the spray of the curling waves kisses her feet. Behold now she reclines on the deep sea's transparent breast and her wishes, carried on the wings of thought, bring speeding to her side the Spirits of the sea. Hither come the

band of Nereus' daughters, chanting their hymns of praise ; shaggy Portunus with green beard ; Salacia with fishes clinging to her robe, and little Palæmon who rides upon a dolphin's back. Here was the gathering of Tritons, who range the whole sea ; some blow soft tunes through the melodious shell ; some with a silken veil restrain the ardour of the importunate sun, one holds a mirror before the eyes of his mistress, while others, yoked in pairs, are the horses of her chariot. Such is the train of Venus when she traverses the Ocean.

Meanwhile Psyche gained nought by her marvellous beauty. All gazed on her and extolled her loveliness, but no king, no son of royal siege, nor suitor from among the people, came forward to ask her hand. They praised her divine loveliness, but only as one praises a statue carved with a sculptor's art. Ere this, her two sisters, whose lesser charms had gained no wide renown, had wedded royal suitors, but Psyche, left at home alone, wept her solitude, and, sick in mind and body, loathed the beauty that all nations praised. The sorrowing father of this unhappy maiden, fearing lest the curse

of the gods had fallen upon them, sought the ancient oracle at Miletus. He offered prayers and sacrifices to the great God, and besought a marriage and a husband for his daughter ; but thus Apollo answered :

“Conduct your daughter to the mountain crag,
Enshroud her in the garments of the grave,
Nor hope to find a son of mortal stock :
A serpent winged shall be her loathsome mate,
Who sweeps the skies, who blasts with flaming
tongue,
Who frights the Gods, makes tremble Jove
himself,
And scares the streams and Styx’s sombre wave.”

When the king, who hitherto had lived happily, received the answer from the oracle, he returned in anguish to his palace and told his queen its dreadful bidding. For many days they moaned and wept ; while the day on which the oracle must be obeyed came ever nearer. Now they make ready the bridal festival of the wretched maid, but the glow of the torches fades away into sooty ashes, the sound of the nuptial flute is changed to the wail of the Lydian measure, the joyous marri-

age hymn turns to a mournful dirge, and the betrothed maiden dries her tears even with her marriage veil, and the whole land mourns the fate of this afflicted house.

But the necessity of obeying the commands of the Gods compels the unfortunate Psyche to prepare for her doom. Sadly they make ready what was to be both her bier and her marriage-bed; the whole people follows this living funeral, and weeping Psyche attends, not her marriage, but her burial. Her parents hesitate to perform this awful sacrifice, but their daughter urges them with these words:

“ Why do you torture your old age with endless groans? Why shorten your lives, dearer to me than mine, by repeated lamentations? Why do you redden my eyes by reddening your own with useless tears? Why do you disfigure those features that are so dear to me? Why do you tear your silvered hair and beat your venerable breasts? This is the glorious reward of my beauty so prized by you. Cruel jealousy has struck you a deadly wound, which now you feel. When the nations worshipped me with divine honours, when, with one voice,

they hailed me as a second Venus, then should you have sorrowed, then should you have wept and mourned me as one snatched from your arms. Now I feel, now I know it was because of the name 'Venus' that I perish. Lead me to the mountain crag that the oracle has appointed; I am impatient to fulfil these happy nuptials; I am impatient to see my noble spouse. Why should I loiter? Why should I shun the coming of him who was born to be the destroyer of the whole world?"

☛ With this she said no more and bravely took her place in the gathering throng, and all wended their way to the pinnacle of the mountain decreed by the oracle. On its topmost peak they abandoned the maiden to her fate, and, leaving behind the nuptial torches that had lighted their way, and which their tears had extinguished, with downcast faces they sought again their homes. As for the sorrowing parents, heart-broken with their dreadful loss, they shut themselves up in their palace and gave themselves over to an endless night. But as Psyche stood on the mountain

10 crag

crag, trembling and bewailing her fate, Zephyr's breath softened the air, ruffling the lappets and folds of her gown, then, raising her softly, with gentle pressure bore her forward, down from the steep rock's summit into a deep valley, and laid her in a meadow's flowery lap.

CHAPTER II §



YING PLEASANTLY

on this bed of soft and dewy grass, Psyche forgot her troubles, and, after a refreshing sleep, rose with a tranquil mind. She saw

a grove planted with huge and lofty trees and in its centre a spring transparent as crystal, near which a royal palace rose, built by no mortal but by heavenly hands, whose very entrance showed that it was a god's delectable abode. The lofty ceiling, in cedar and ivory curiously fretted, rested on golden pillars. The walls were covered with silver mouldings, picturing all the animals of the world. Surely a man of cunning art, a demi-god, nay, in sooth, a god it was that wrought this massy silver with such subtle skill. The flooring was a mosaic of precious stones worked up into many wondrous pictures. Oh, happy and thrice happy they who walk on gems and jewels! All other parts of this wide and spacious palace were costly above all cost; the walls of massive gold shone with their own light, making their own day, all careless of the

sun; even so glittered the rooms, the porches and the doors: nor was the rest of this lordly mansion less richly adorned: to mortal mind it seemed as if its builder must have been Jupiter himself, in order that he might dwell among mankind.

☛ Allured by its beauty, Psyche draws nearer, and gathering courage steps across the threshold. Fascinated by the sight of all these wonders, she passes from one to the other and gazes up at the galleries fashioned in perfect symmetry and with golden lustre richly emblazed; for the earth knows no treasure that had not been pressed into service. But stranger still than all this wealth, there were no bolts, no bars, nor guardian to keep watch over this treasure-house.

While she stood delighting in these wonders, she heard a voice issuing from the void, saying: “Wherefore, lady, do you stand amazed at these treasures? All are yours. Enter, therefore, into your apartment, on a couch repair your wearied powers, and refresh yourself in the bath. We, whose voices you hear, are

your servants, and carefully will minister unto you, nor, when we have arrayed you, will you have to wait for a royal banquet.”

Psyche felt the comfort of divine protection, and, guided by the advice of her unseen counsellors, she first slept and then drove away her weariness by a bath. Suddenly she perceived near her a semi-circular table furnished with viands, and feeling sure it was for her use, she sat down without hesitation. Instantly she was supplied with wines like nectar and with every kind of dish, by no visible agency but as if borne on the wind. She could see no one, but heard words in the air and was served only by voices. After a superb banquet, an invisible singer entered and sang, while an unseen player touched her lyre. Then the music of a choir crept upon her ear; but no human being appeared.

☛ When these delights had ended and evening was drawing near, Psyche sought her couch. Soon night came on, and then she heard a gentle noise. In such a solitude Psyche feared for her virginity, and feared the more

because she knew not what she feared. Then came to her couch the unknown bridegroom and made Psyche his wife ; but before dawn he disappeared. Immediately the voices came and attended upon the young bride who had lost her maidenhood. In this way things went on for a long while ; by habit this new life became sweet, and the sound of the mysterious voices became the solace of her loneliness.

CHAPTER III §C



IN THE MEANWHILE

her parents grew old in the sorrow that nothing could assuage. The story of her fate was spread abroad, and when it reached her sisters'

ears, they hastened to the lonely hearth of their parents to try to comfort them. That same night Psyche's husband said to her (for though she could not see him, yet she could hear his voice and feel the pressure of his limbs) : " Dearly loved wife, cruel fate threatens you with a great danger, which only by great caution can you escape. Your sisters, mourning your death, are seeking traces of you, and soon will reach the mountain crag. If by chance you hear their lamentations, do not speak to them, and under no circumstances look on them ; else will you bring great sorrow upon me and utter ruin upon yourself."

§ Psyche bowed her head and promised her husband that she would obey his wishes. But, as soon as night had passed, she spent the day in tears and dejection, complaining that she

was more than ever lost, close confined in a prison of marvels and bereft of all human intercourse, unable to carry consolation to her sisters when they wept over her ; nor even able to see them. Refreshed neither by bath nor food, in tears she sought her bed. A moment later her husband came, earlier than his wont, and embracing her, all tears, uttered his reproach : “ Is it thus that you are keeping your promises ? What then can your husband expect or hope of you ? By day, by night, even when in the arms of your lover, you do not cease your tears. Ah well ! Henceforth do as you will, listen to the desires that will lead you to your ruin : but you will remember my warning when, too late, you begin to repent.”

Then, by prayers and by threatening to slay herself, she extorted permission from her husband to see her sisters in order to embrace them and to calm their grief : and he, overpersuaded by the entreaties of his bride, gave way, and also permitted her to give them what gold and gems she would. But at the same time he warned her not to be misled by the evil counsels of her sisters, and seek to view

her husband's form, lest her unholy curiosity should cast her down from her height of pleasure, and for ever prevent the renewal of their embraces. With lightened heart she thanked her husband : " Rather," she said, " would I die a hundred deaths than break our sweet bonds : for I love you so tenderly : I love you, whoever you are, more than very life nor would I change you for Cupid himself. Add one more boon to my prayers, and command your servant Zephyr to bring my sisters here to me in the same way that I was brought." Pressing luxurious kisses on him, whispering soft words and intertwining her limbs, she wooed him with passionate caresses. He fell, conquered by the power of love, and promised all. Then at the approach of dawn he slipped from the arms of his bride.

§ The two sisters, having learnt the way to the crag on which Psyche had been left, hastened thither, and there they wept and mourned : while the rocks echoed back their lamentations. As they cried aloud on the name of their unfortunate sister the sound of their voices
23 travelled

travelled down into the valley, and Psyche, beside herself with joy, rushed out from her palace and cried: "Why do you torture yourselves with needless woe? She whom you mourn is here. End your complaints and dry your tear-washed cheeks, and now, since you can, fold in your arms the sister who has caused your tears." Then she called Zephyr, and told him her husband's order. At once, obedient to command, he raised them on a gentle breeze and carried them along without harm. Now they embraced with oft-repeated kisses; and their tears, so lately dried, flowed again from joy. "But enter," she said, "my home, and, in company with your Psyche, drive away all remains of your sorrow." Thus saying, she showed them the palace prodigal in gold and treasure, she called their attention to the ministering voices, and then she refreshed them with a sumptuous bath and an abundant and godlike feast. When, however, their wonder at all these marvels began to wear off, envy was born in their hearts. One of them would not leave off her prying questions as to who was the lord of this celestial abode, who and what was her
husband

husband. But Psyche would not disobey her husband's command, and kept her secret. She made up a story that he was a beautiful youth with cheeks covered with down, who was, for the most part, occupied in hunting over the plains and mountains. And then, lest in a long conversation she might betray her secret, she loaded them with precious gifts, and called Zephyr to convey them back.

The two sisters returned home, and, already pricked on by the bitter gall of envy, debated with each other. At last one ended by saying: "Fortune, how cruel and unjust you are! For what reason has it pleased you that, daughters of the same parents, we should meet with such different destinies? We, who are the eldest, were married to husbands who were strangers, and whose servants we are; we live banished from our home and our parents, as if exiles: but this, the youngest, the child born in a satiated bed, has all this wealth and a divine husband, she who does not know how to use rightly all this abundance! Did you see, sister, what jewels there were in the palace, how her clothing shone, how the gems glit-

tered, how she walked on gold? What! if she also has a husband as beautiful, as she says he is, no one in the world is more fortunate. Perhaps, when his affection has been deepened by intimacy, her divine husband will make her a goddess. By Hercules, that is it, for so she bore herself and walked. Though still a woman she looks aloft and aims at divinity, she who has voices for servants, and compels the very winds. But I, poor wretch! Fate has given me a husband older than my father, balder than a pumpkin, a boy in stature, and who keeps the whole house under lock and key." Then followed the other, "I endure a husband bent double with gout, and who, for this reason, can but rarely offer up a lover's dues: I spend most of my time rubbing his hands, crippled and hardened with chalkstones, making my once delicate hands all chapped and hard by preparing evil-smelling poultices, by touching the filthy bandages and foetid cataplasms: I do not fulfil the gentle duties of a wife, but the arduous labours of a nurse. That you, sister, should see all this—you who bear patiently so much suffering, or, to speak plainly,

26 such

such slavery ! As for me, I can no longer bear to see such good fortune fall on one so unworthy. Just think with what pride and arrogance she treated us ; how with her insolent airs she disclosed a mind fraught with vanity, how out of all these riches she unwillingly threw us a few poor presents, and then, wearied by our company, she ordered us to be caught up and whisked away on the wind. I am no woman, if, as I live, I do not drag her down to the ground, and if, as I expect, you feel as annoyed as I do at the affront we have received, let us put our heads together to pay her out. For one thing, it is not necessary that we should show the presents we have received, either to our parents or to any one else, or to tell them we are quite sure of her safety. It is bad enough to have seen those things which it has pained us to see, without having to tell our parents and all the people of her happy state ; not that she can be really happy when she has no one before whom she can flaunt her wealth. Ah ! young woman, you shall learn that we are your elder sisters, and not your slaves. Now indeed we may go

back to our husbands and our humble hearths, but when we have fully thought out our plans we will return to punish your arrogance." This evil project pleased these two wicked sisters: they hid the costly gifts they had received, and then, as if they had been weeping, they scratched their faces and let fall deceitful tears. Then, when they had made their parents' grief bleed again, they went away and, raging with jealousy, they sought their own homes, there to plan some cruel scheme for the ruin or death of their innocent sister.

§ During their nightly interviews Psyche received fresh warnings from her mysterious husband: "Do you not see what dangers fortune is preparing for you in the future? And if you do not arm yourself betimes, they will close in upon you. Those false hags are straining every nerve to get you into their clutches: their chief wile is to get you to see my face, which, as I have often told you, if you see it once you will never see again. Therefore if these horrid witches, armed with their hate, come again—and that they will
28 come

come I know—avoid them altogether, or, if through tenderness and affection you cannot do this, neither listen to nor answer any remarks about your husband. Here we will rear a family, and here your childish womb shall bring forth another child, destined, if you keep our secret, to be a god, if you break it, to be a mortal.”

☛ Psyche grew glad at these tidings ; she rejoiced in the hope of a divine child to lighten her loneliness and gloried in name and dignity of motherhood. Impatiently she counted the days and months as they passed : she wondered at the strange load she carried when her fertile womb grew big. But alas, these two pestilent furies, breathing the black poison of vipers, were hastening on their impious errand. Then the transient husband once more warned Psyche. “Now are we at the last day and have reached the last fatal moment : now jealous hatred has armed herself, has sounded her alarum and marches on to battle, now, with drawn sword, your sisters seek to slay you. Alas ! dearest Psyche, with
29 what

what dangers are we surrounded ! Take pity on yourself and on me, guard well your secret so that you may not bring sorrow on your husband, yourself, and our still unborn child. These impious women, who in their murderous hate towards you would trample under foot the ties of blood, are no longer worthy to be called sisters. Take care that you neither see nor listen to them, when, like Sirens, their hateful voices echo from the mountain crags.”

Psyche answered, sighing and in tearful voice, “ You have long had proof of my faithfulness and discretion, and in this fresh trial I will show you once more the firmness of my character. Only order Zephyr to fulfil his duties quickly, and as the sight of your divine face is denied me, let me at least see my sisters. This I beseech you by your flowing and perfumed locks, by your cheeks as smooth and rounded as mine, by your breast warm with its mysterious heat. As I hope to see your features in our child, be moved by my entreaties, allow me to embrace my sisters, and make happy your Psyche, who lives for you alone. I do not ask to see your face, nor do

the shades of night oppress me now : I have you, the light of my world." The husband, overcome by her soft embraces, dried her tears with his hair, acceded to her requests; and then by flight prevented the light of the dawning day.

☛ Having arranged their plot, the two sisters, as soon as they reached the land, made straight for the pinnacle, without tarrying to visit their parents, nor did they even await the coming of the wind, but insolently threw themselves into space. Zephyr, remembering the commands of his king, caught them, although unwillingly, on the lap of a breeze, and brought them safely down to the earth. Hastening to the palace, they embraced their prey, calling themselves, with lying tongues, her loving sisters. Then hiding, under smiling faces, hearts overflowing with guile, they spoke loving words : "Psyche, you are no longer a little girl, but soon to be a mother. Think what a treasure you are carrying in your womb ! What joy you will bring to our house ! How happy shall we be to help rear this glorious child, who should be another

Cupid, if, as he is sure to do, he takes after his parents.”

§ Thus, little by little, they dupe their sister with their deceitful endearments. To rest them after their journey she places seats for them, prepares them steaming baths, and entertains them with a feast of rare and pleasant dishes. She orders the lutes to play, the pipes to sound, the choirs to sing : and with tenderest melodies these invisible players soothe the spirits of their hearers. Such, however, was the wickedness of the two sisters that no honeyed notes could soften their hearts, but they direct all their conversation with a view of entangling their sister in their nets, and begin to enquire who and of what family and condition was her husband. Psyche, in her simplicity forgetting the story she had previously told, makes up a fresh tale ; she says her husband is from a neighbouring province, engaged in commerce, of middle age, with hair just beginning to whiten : then, not wishing to prolong this conversation she loads them with presents,

and sends them back in their aërial chariot.

§ When, carried by Zephyr's gentle breeze, they arrived home, they spoke thus together : "What, sister, shall we think of that simpleton's monstrous lies? Yesterday he was a youth with downy cheeks, now a middle-aged man turning grey. What manner of man can he be who has grown old so suddenly? Sister, it must either be that this lying woman deceives us, or that she does not know her husband's face. Whichever of these two conjectures holds the truth, she must be driven from her present state. If she does not know her husband's face, it must be a god whom she has married, and of a god is she pregnant. Certainly will I hang myself, if ever she is proclaimed the mother of a god—which Heaven forbid! Let us go to our parents, and let us devise some scheme which will fit in with our present conversation."

Burning with envy, they could scarcely speak to their parents, and through the night they tossed on sleepless beds. In the morning they

hastened to the rock, and, by the now habitual help of the breeze, they flew quickly through the air. They rubbed their eyes to bring forth tears, and, full of guile, they called for the girl. " You live happily and contentedly, ignorant and incurious of the great evil and danger that surrounds you. But, we, who have been keeping a sleepless watch over your fortunes, are heart-broken at your peril. For we have made a discovery the truth of which is beyond dispute, and which we, who are companions in all your sorrow and misfortune, dare not hide from you. An immense serpent with many coils, with fangs full of poison, with maw unfathomable and terrible, each night lies sleeping by your side. Remember the Pythian oracle, who proclaimed you the bride of a cruel monster. Many of the husbandmen who hunt the neighbourhood, and many of our neighbours, have seen him in the evening when he has returned from the pasture, and is bathing in the adjacent stream. They all believe that he will not long allow you to revel in this life of sweetness, but as soon as you are at your full reckoning he will devour you like a ripened fruit. Make
34 your

your choice ; either take the advice of your sisters, whose whole care is your safety, and by flying death, live with us free from all danger, or find your tomb in the bowels of this most savage monster. But of course, if the silence of this land, broken only by these mysterious voices, if this foul, secret and dangerous amour, and the embraces of this poisonous reptile please you, we, your loving sisters, can do no more : by advising you we have done our duty.”

☞ Poor Psyche, her simple trusting heart is overcome by these dreadful prophecies, and she loses all her presence of mind. She forgets all her husband’s warnings and all her promises. She throws herself headlong into this sea of trouble ; pale and trembling, she speaks in faltering tones. “Indeed, you have been loving sisters to me ; what you tell me is no doubt true. I have never seen my husband’s face, nor have I any idea from what country he is sprung ; only at night I hear the murmur of his voice. I embrace a husband whose position in life I do not know, and who always

flies from me before the dawn. I believe you say rightly that he is some monster, for he is always in the greatest fear lest I should see his face, and foretells the greatest evils, should I succumb to my curiosity. If you can help to rescue your sister, fenced round with danger, come now to her aid : for it would be worse than useless if you have told me of a danger from which, even with your help, I cannot be delivered.”

☛ Now that they had discovered the whole of their sister's secret, these wicked women make haste to fulfil their infamous intentions. One of them says to her : “The bond of sisterhood compelled us to seek out every road that could lead to your safety : after deepest thought, we have found one, which we will point out to you. Take the sharpest knife you can find, strop it on the palm of your hand, and hide it in the part of the bed where you usually lie : then take a lamp well filled with oil, so that it may burn brightly, and place it somewhere behind the curtains. All this you must do secretly. Then when, according to his wont, with trailing step

36 this

this monster has reached the bed, and is chained in deep sleep, slip out of the bed, on tip-toe, and with naked foot, take the lamp from its hiding-place, and use its light to help you in your great enterprise. Seize your two-edged weapon, raise high your hand, and with a blow sever the head from the shoulders of this poisonous reptile. We will be at hand to help, and as soon as you have gained safety by his death, we will attend you, and will carry you and your riches to your friends, where we will find you a husband among human creatures.” Having by these words enhanced their sister’s dismay, they at once leave her : fearing to stay near the scene of the intended crime. The wonted breeze carries them safely to the rock, from thence they quickly descend, and taking ship, they sail away.

§ But Psyche is left all alone, unless to be racked with all the anguish of despair is to be in company. Her thoughts rise and fall, like the waves on a stormy sea. First, with fierce mind, her hands make ready the instruments of crime ; then she falters with wavering heart.

She makes feverish haste, she stands with idle hands, she scorns all danger, she trembles, she weeps, she is enraged ; for she hates the monster, but she loves the husband. Evening, however, approaches, touching everything with its shadows, and she hastens to prepare the means of her odious misdeed ; then night comes on, bringing the bridegroom in its train, who, after some amorous dalliance, falls into a deep sleep.

Then Psyche, hitherto so gentle in mind and body, is driven by the force of savage fate : gathering strength, she seizes the lamp and knife : her courage conquering her sex. The first ray of light that falls on the bed discovers its secret. There she sees the sweetest and most docile of monsters : Cupid himself, the comeliest of the gods, lying clothed in all his beauty. At this sight the lamp itself shone more brightly, and the knife was ashamed of its accursed edge. But Psyche, nearly frightened to death at this sight, loses all presence of mind : blanched and trembling she falls on her knees, and seeks, in her own bosom, to sheathe the dagger's blade ; which straightway would she

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The Discovery of Cupid.

have done, had not her fear made the weapon slip from her nerveless hand. But although now weakened and without defence, the sight of his godlike face strengthens her mind and comforts her heart. She sees those radiant locks, ambrosia-scented, the milk-white neck, the damask cheek over which wander those glorious curls whose brilliancy makes the lamp's light tremble. His wings, sparkling with dew and gleaming with the whiteness of the lily, are folded at his shoulders, their delicate points moving gently with the wind. The rest of his body smooth and clear, and such that Venus had no need to blush for having borne him. At the foot of the bed lie the bow and arrowed quiver, the great god's pleasant weapons.

Curiosity seizes on Psyche ; she touches and wonders at her husband's weapons. She draws an arrow out of the quiver and tries the point with the tip of her thumb, but the trembling of her hand causes her to prick too deeply, and a few beads of rosy blood ooze out through the skin. Thus Psyche all unwittingly falls in love with Love and burns for him more and more. Breathless and craving she bends over

him, and, although she fears to break his slumbers, she showers on him her passionate and burning kisses. But while her excited mind is all aglow with these delights, the lamp—whether through the blackest perfidy, or hateful jealousy, or whether it longed to touch that beautiful form as if to kiss it—from its flame lets fall a drop of burning oil on the god's right shoulder. Oh ! reckless and accursed lamp, unworthy minister of love. You burn the god who burns all others. Was it not a lover who first invented you, so that he might prolong his pleasures, even into the night ?

☞ The god, burnt by the oil, starts up from his sleep and, seeing his secret so shamefully betrayed, tries to fly in silence from the presence of his unhappy wife : but Psyche, as he rises, clings to his knees with both hands. She clings to him in agony as he pursues his skyward course until, tired out, she lets go and falls to the earth. The god would not leave her lying there on the ground, and alights on the top of a neighbouring cypress, and from its height speaks to her in deep sadness.

“Psyche, foolish Psyche, I forgot the orders of my mother Venus, who commanded me to strike you with an infatuation for the meanest and most wretched of men, instead of which I myself became your lover. I see now how foolishly I acted, how I, renowned for my arrow, was wounded by my own weapon. I made you my wife : how could I have seemed such a monster to you that you would have cut off the head of him whose eyes were lit up with love for you ? How often I told you to be ever on the watch ! How often I warned you ! Your evil advisers shall receive their reward for their wicked counsel, my flight will be sufficient punishment for you.” Ending with these words, he spreads his wings and flies away.

CHAPTER IV 50



PSYCHE, PRONE ON
the ground, with breaking
heart followed with her
eyes her husband's flight
as far as she could see.

When the oarage of his wings had carried him out of sight, she threw herself headlong into a river that ran close by. But the merciful stream, in honour of the god who could inflame even the waters, and also through fear of his vengeance, caught her up in the lap of a gentle wave and threw her unharmed on its grass-grown bank. By chance Pan was sitting on a hillock close by the stream, embracing Echo, the mountain goddess, whom he was teaching to repeat every kind of song. Near the bank gambolled the goats who browsed on the herbage that fringed the stream. The goat-legged god saw Psyche bowed down in sorrow, and, knowing the cause of her suffering, with gentle words called her to his side. "Poor child, although I am but uncouth and clownish, age has brought me much know-

men say are as good as divination, are wrong, your wandering and uncertain footsteps, your pale cheek, your heart-drawn sighs, your eyes flooded with tears, disclose an untoward love. Listen to my words: do not try to throw yourself from a precipice, nor by any other means to seek a violent death. Dry your tears and pursue Cupid, the greatest of the gods, with your prayers, for he is young and voluptuous and may be persuaded by your charms.”

§• Psyche did not reply to the rustic god: but honouring him as a propitious divinity she went her way. Footsore and weary, she wandered for some time until, after having gone along an unknown path she came to the city over which reigned the husband of one of her sisters. As soon as she discovered where she was, Psyche made known her presence to her sister. After they had met and had embraced, the sister began to ask Psyche the reason of her coming, who said: “You remember you persuaded me that a monster, assuming the name of husband, slept by my

46 side

side, and that I ought to kill him with my knife before he swallowed me up in his gluttonous maw? But when, having taken your advice, I first looked on his face by the aid of the guilty lamp, I saw a sight marvellous and divine, the son of Venus, yes, I tell you, it was he, Cupid, lying in sweet, quiet sleep. Excited by the beauty of this spectacle, and filled with desire, I could not contain my tumultuous passion. By a cursed chance, the lamp let fall a drop of burning oil on his shoulder. The pain woke him up immediately, and he saw me armed with sword and fire. 'How hideous,' said he, 'is your crime; leave at once my couch; I cast you off for ever, and I will join myself in marriage with your sister' (and he called you by your name). He then gave an order to Zephyr to carry me outside the boundaries of the palace."

☞ Psyche had scarcely finished speaking, when the sister, filled with jealousy and tormented by a criminal desire, hoodwinked her husband with a lying tale that she had

just heard of the death of her parents, took ship immediately and made haste to the mountain crag. Although another wind was blowing, blinded by her impatience, she called out, "Receive me Cupid, a spouse who is worthy of you, and Zephyr catch up your mistress." Then she leapt far into the abyss : but even her body could not reach the desired valley, for the jagged rocks caught and broke her limbs to pieces. She met the fate she deserved, for her scattered limbs and entrails were devoured by the birds and beasts of prey. Nor did the punishment of the second sister linger on its way, for Psyche, beginning again her wanderings, came to another city where the other sister lived. Snared by the same tale and burning to make an incestuous marriage, this other sister also hastened to the crag, and likewise met there with her death.

☛ While Psyche, in her unflagging search for Cupid, was wandering all over the world, he lay groaning in his mother's chamber suffering from the burns from the lamp.

Then a sea-mew, one of those birds who cleave with their wings the waves of the sea, dived down into the depths of Ocean's lap. He alighted near the spot where lovely Venus was bathing and told her how her son was suffering from a grievous burn, and lay on her bed, his recovery doubtful: that rumour and great scandal concerning the whole of Venus' family was spreading on every side. "They say your son," said the sea-mew, "has been dallying with a hill-side mistress, while you have been beguiling your hours in bathing in the sea; hence there has been no more love, or pleasure, or charm: nothing has gone smoothly, but all things have been rough and rude; there have been no weddings, no dear friendships, no love for children, but all has been anarchy and the druff from unholy unions." These words the garrulous and tale-bearing bird poured into Venus' ear, stirring up her anger against her son.

§ Venus, filled with anger, cried out: "What, has my good son already found a mistress? Tell me, you who alone serve me faithfully,

what is the name of the woman who has beguiled my innocent and beardless boy? Is it one of the Nymphs, one of the Hours, one of the band of Muses, or one of the Graces who wait upon me?"

That chattering bird could not keep silent. "I don't know, mistress," he said, "but I believe it is a maid that he sighs for, and, if I remember rightly, her name is Psyche." Then Venus, mad with anger, called out: "What, he loves this Psyche, the rival of my beauty, the stealer of my name! Did the boy take me for a bawd who showed him the girl for him to enjoy?"

☛ With these angry words she rose quickly out of the sea and straightway sought her golden chamber, and there, as she had heard, she found her wounded son. Standing on the threshold she cried out: "Here is fine behaviour which will brighten the renown of our family and of your reputation: that you should spurn her commands, who is not only your mother, but is also your queen! What means it that, instead of racking my enemy on the cross of a
50 squalid

squalid love, you, a mere boy, should indulge in the embraces of a licentious and immature passion, and think that I would countenance my rival being made my daughter-in-law ? Do you think, you little monster, that you are safe to be always my only son, and that I am past the age of child-bearing ? I would have you know that I will have another son, better behaved than you : or at any rate, so that you may feel more deeply the weight of my anger, I will adopt one of my pages ; to him will I give the wings, the torch, the bow, even the arrows and all the equipment, which is mine and which was entrusted to you for uses far other than those to which you have put them. You never would bend to the instructions of your good parents, but from your earliest infancy you were untoward and petulant in your actions. How often would you beat irreverently your elders ; every day you would tear the clothes off my back, you little wretch, and a thousand times have you struck me, and now you defy my authority as if I were a helpless widow, nor do you even fear your step-father, that brave and mighty fighter. On

the contrary, you have been in the habit of procuring girls for him, to my great torment. But now I will make you pay the penalty for your misdeeds, and you shall taste the bitterness of your marriage. What have I done that I should be made a laughing-stock? Where can I hide myself? How can I punish this little serpent? Must I seek the help of my enemy Sobriety; whom I have so often offended in order to satisfy this boy's fantasies? Must I consult that awkward clown of a woman? I shudder at the thought: but, from wherever it comes, I must not disdain help in my search for revenge. Yes, I must seek her out forthwith, for no one else will chastise this young knave so severely. She will unstrap his quiver, blunt his arrows, cut his bowstring, quench his torch, and, as for his body, she will keep that in check by stern means. I will think my injuries atoned for when she has cut off his hair, those golden curls with which I have so often played: when she has clipped those wings which have been dewed with the nectar from my breast."

§ When she had finished she rushed in a fury out of the house. There she was joined by Ceres and Juno, who inquired why her face was so flushed, why her stern frown and flashing of her beautiful eyes? “You come at an opportune moment,” said Venus; “so fierce is my anger that I was like to have done violence to myself. Seek for me, I pray you, with all your might that vagabond Psyche, who has flown and escaped me. For the scandal that has spread about my house, and the escapades of him who is no longer fit to be called my son are not unknown to you.”

§ Then the goddesses, who knew all that had passed, strove to allay her fierce anger: “What, mistress, are your son’s misdeeds so great that you strive with all your might against his desires, and even would destroy her whom he loves? Is it, pray, such a fearful crime to make eyes at a pretty girl? Do you not know he is now a sturdy youth, or have you forgotten the tale of his years? Because he carries his years so lightly, does he still seem to you a boy? You are a mother, and

moreover, a sensible woman ; do you intend always to keep so nice an eye on your son's gallantries, to rebuke him for his lapses from virtue, to enchain his desires and to condemn, when found in your son, the arts and charms that all have learnt from you ? What god, what mortal, would put up with you, sowing desires in all men, while wishing to restrain the play of passion in your own household, and to close the workshop of woman's transgressions ? ” Thus, wishing to keep in his favour, they defended the absent Cupid, whose arrows they so greatly feared. But Venus, incensed at the injuries she had received being treated with ridicule, turned her back on them and with quickened pace made for the sea.

CHAPTER V 90



EANWHILE PSYCHE

wandered through the land, by day and night seeking traces of Cupid, her longing growing each day more ardent, hoping, even

if she could not win back her angered husband by the fascinations of a wife, she might be able to do so by the prayers of a slave. One day in the distance she saw a temple, capping a rough mountain's summit. "Perhaps," said she, "my lord dwells there." She quickened her steps towards her goal ; hope and desire conquering her weariness. Resolutely she climbed the hard and lofty crags and reached the entrance of the sanctuary. There she saw some ears of corn, some in sheaves and some plaited into crowns, there also she saw some ears of barley. Sickles were there and all the implements a harvester needs : but all in disorder, as if thrown down by wearied labourers. Psyche tidied all these things and put each in its place, feeling she ought not to neglect service to any divine sanctuary, but to court the favour of every sympathetic god.

§ While she was doing this with zeal and care, kindly Ceres caught sight of her and exclaimed : “Alas, poor Psyche ! Venus, beside herself with anger, makes unremitting search for you ; she seeks the direst penalty for you, and calls all her strength together to obtain revenge. Are you here taking care of my belongings and thinking of all else but your safety ?” Then Psyche fell upon her knees and with her abundant tears bathed the feet of the goddess, while, with hair sweeping the ground and with many a fervent prayer, she implored her help. “By your hand, which gives forth fruits to the earth, by the pleasant rites of the harvesters, by the mysteries of the secret chest, by the chariot winged by dragons who serve you, by the furrows of Sicilian soil, by the car that carried off Proserpine, by the earth who imprisoned her so fast, by her dark subterranean nuptials, by the light that guided you on your return after you had found your daughter, by all those things that the sacred silence of Attic Eleusis conceals, I beseech you take pity on poor Psyche who kneels to you. Let me hide among these sheaves, if only for a

few days : perhaps by that time the wrath of the goddess will have passed away, or at least, by an interval of rest, my wayworn limbs will have gathered fresh strength !”

“Your prayers and sorrows,” replied Ceres, “go to my heart, and I would that I could help you : but Venus is my kinswoman and to her am I bound by all the ties of friendship, moreover she is an excellent woman and I do not wish to expose myself to her illwill. Leave, therefore, the precincts of my temple without delay, and think yourself lucky that I have not kept you prisoner.” Psyche, repulsed in spite of her hopes, was now doubly sad. She retraced her steps and saw in the bottom of a valley a shrine of skilful architecture. Wishing not to neglect the chance of a kinder reception, however doubtful that chance might be, but to implore the assistance of every divinity, she therefore drew near the sacred portals. There she saw the most precious offerings, robes embroidered with golden letters hung on the branches of trees and fixed to the doorposts of the temple which attested the favours that had been received and the goddess to whom they

were consecrated. Then on bended knee and with hands clasping the still warm altar, stifling her sobs, she breathed forth her prayer :

☪ “ Great wife and sister of Jove, whether you dwell in the ancient temple of Samos, which rejoices in having heard your earliest cries, in having been your nursery and playground : or whether you dwell in the happy seats of lofty Carthage where men adore you as a maiden carried up to heaven in a lion-drawn car : or whether, on the banks of Inachus, where you are proclaimed the wife of Jupiter and the queen of goddesses, you protect the far-famed walls of Argos : you whom all the Orient worships as Zygia and all the Occident as Lucina ! in my deep affliction be to me Juno the Protectress, pity me, outwearied by my long drawn suffering, and save me from the danger that hangs over me : even as I know you are wont, in their time of peril, to help all women labouring with child.” At these prayers, Juno presented herself in all the pomp of heavenly dignity, and answered : “ By all I hold sacred, I wish I could answer your prayers : but it would be

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against the wish of Venus my daughter-in-law, whom I have always loved as my daughter, and this propriety forbids me to do : the laws also forbid me to harbour a slave who has fled from her mistress.”

§3 Psyche was now in despair at the utter shipwreck of her fortunes. Unable to find traces of her winged husband, and robbed of all hope and safety, she broods over her sad destiny. “ Whose help can I seek in my tribulation, whose help can I obtain when even these goddesses, in spite of their good wishes, dare not come to my aid ? Surrounded as I am, with so many snares, how can I retrace my steps ? Under what roof, within what shades can I hide myself from the all-seeing eyes of great Venus ? Why not arm yourself with dauntless courage, bravely cast aside all fruitless hopes, and throw yourself, of your own accord, before the feet of your mistress ? Perhaps your submission, although tardy, will soften her cruel wrath. Who knows but that you may find in his mother’s palace him for whom you have sought so long ? ” Pre-
61 pared

pared, by surrendering, for the doubtful chance of safety, or for the completion of her ruin, she thinks out the form of her supplication.

☉ Venus, deciding to lay aside earthly means to succeed in her quest, seeks the heavens. She orders her chariot to be made ready, the one that Vulcan, the wonderful goldsmith, had wrought with his subtle art, and which he had offered her as a bridal gift before the consummation of her nuptials. This chariot, made more beautiful by the fretwork of the file, had gained in value by its loss of gold. From the army of white doves who lodged near the chamber of their mistress, four fly out, and with joyous haste, bending their tinted necks, they fasten themselves to the gem-covered yoke : their mistress takes her place and gaily they rise on wing.

With boisterous twittering, the wanton sparrows swirl round the chariot of the goddess, while the other birds with their sweetest song herald the advent of the queen. The clouds part asunder, and heaven opens his gate to his daughter

daughter, and with joy the vast empyrean receives the goddess, nor do the choring attendants of Venus fear either the fierce eagle or the ravenous hawk.

She turns her steps towards Jupiter's royal seat, and demands the use of the services of Mercury with the sonorous voice. Jupiter bows his azure brow in consent. Then the exulting Venus descends from heaven accompanied by Mercury, and coaxes him with these words : " Arcadian brother, you know that Venus has never done anything without the help of Mercury, nor is it unknown to you how long I have made fruitless search for this slave who has escaped me. Nothing remains but that you, as crier, should publicly make the offer of a reward to any one who shall recover her. Obey my commands with speed, make clear the signs and tokens by which she can be recognised, so that if, hereafter, any one is accused of the crime of unlawfully harbouring her, ignorance cannot be pleaded as an excuse." With these words she hands him a paper on which is inscribed Psyche's name and other details and as soon as she had done this, she goes home.

§ Mercury did not fail to obey. He went through all the countries of the world and made known the following proclamation and reward : “ If any one shall take in flight, or discover the hiding place of a fugitive slave of Venus, Psyche by name, the daughter of a king, he shall hand her over to Mercury the herald, behind the Murtian boundaries. He who does this shall receive, as reward, seven sweet fierce kisses from Venus herself, and one, sweet with the honey drawn from her caressing tongue.” This proclamation by Mercury aroused in every one a wild desire for the reward, and quite removed any irresolution which Psyche might hitherto have felt.

§ As she approached the portals of her mistress she met one of the attendants of Venus, called Habit, who, as soon as she saw Psyche, cried at the top of her voice : “ At last, basest of slaves, have you learnt that you have a mistress? Or, with an audacity that would fit well with the rest of your character, will you pretend that you did not know what trouble we have been put to in our search for
64 you

you? But luckily you have fallen into my hands, you are caught fast in the claws of Orcus, and without delay shall receive the punishment fit for your rebellion." With these words she savagely seized the unresisting Psyche by the hair and dragged her along.

☛ When she had been brought before Venus, the goddess broke into triumphant laughter, but it was the laughter of one fierce with wrath: then, shaking her head and scratching her right ear, she says: "At length you have deigned to visit your mother-in-law? Or is it not rather that you have come to visit your husband, who lies sore wounded by you? But be at ease, I will show you how a good daughter-in-law should be trained." Then she called out: "Where are my two slaves, Sorrow and Care?" When they were called in, she handed Psyche over to them for torture. They followed out the orders of their mistress, and having scourged poor Psyche, and put her under all forms of torture, they brought her again before the throne of their mistress.

☛ Once more Venus broke forth in laughter .
“Behold,” said she, “that swelling belly ought to obtain my sympathy ; will not its glorious fruit make me a happy grandmother ? How nice for me to be called ‘grandmother’ while still in the flower of my youth, and to hear this low slave’s child called the grandson of Venus ! But I am wrong in saying that he will be my grandson. The marriage is unequal : it was celebrated in a country place, without witnesses, without the father’s consent ; it cannot be considered valid : your child, therefore, will be born a bastard, even if I let you live to bring forth a child at all.”

☛ When she had ended, she rushed on Psyche, tore her clothes to shreds, pulled her hair, and struck her on the head with great violence. Then she had brought to her some grains of corn, of barley, of millet, of poppy seed, of chick pea, of lentils, and of beans. She mixed them all up together into one confused heap and said to Psyche : “You seem to me so ill-favoured a slave, that the only way for you to win a lover is to show great zeal in his
66 service

service. I will test what good there is in you. These seeds that I have mixed together, separate them one by one, and arrange them in their different classes. Before night you must submit your completed task for my approval." Having pointed out the great heap of seeds, she went away to attend a wedding feast.

§☛ Psyche made no effort to sort this confused and chaotic heap, but, dismayed by the barbarity of the order, she stood in silent stupor. Then an ant, one of those little insects that live in the fields, appreciating the enormity of her task, took pity on the bride of the great god, and, execrating the mother-in-law's cruelty, ran quickly and called together the whole of the neighbouring tribe of ants. "Take pity," he cried, "oh nimble children of the fruitful earth, take pity on Love's wife : hasten to succour a beautiful maid, from approaching danger."

They came running up, these little six-legged animals, tumbling one over another like the waves in the sea ; then they separated the

grain, and, arranging each in its class, they swiftly disappeared. As the night fell, Venus returned from the wedding feast, soaked with wine and smelling of balsam, with her body wound round with gleaming roses. When she saw the miraculous accomplishment of the task she had set, she cried : “ This is none of your work, you deceitful wretch, but of his, to whom, to his and your ruin, you appeared pleasing.” Then, throwing her a piece of black bread, she sought her couch.

§☛ Meanwhile Cupid was kept close prisoner in the innermost room of the palace, partly that his wound should not grow worse through his petulance and restlessness, partly that he should not meet his love. Thus, although separated, the two lovers passed a sad night under the same roof. Just as Aurora was driving across the sky, Venus called Psyche and said : “ Do you see that wood, through which a deep banked river flows : the furthest trees of the wood looking on the source of the stream ? There you will find sheep shining with golden fleeces, and grazing without a shepherd. I

68 command

command you at once to get from them, as best you can, a flock of their precious wool and bring it back to me.”

☛ Psyche started off willingly, not, however, to fulfil her task, but from the rocky precipice by the river-side to find an end to her sufferings. But from the middle of the river a green reed, the cradle of many a tender harmony, inspired by the gods, comforted Psyche with these gentle words : “ Psyche, although you have been racked with so many hardships, do not stain my holy waters by your unhallowed death : nor go near the fierce sheep who pasture on these banks, for, when the sun pours down on them with its midday heat, they are wont to become mad with rage, and with their sharp horns, their hard foreheads, and sometimes with their poisonous bites, they bring to mortals a cruel death. Until midday is passed and the sun’s heat diminished, and the flock has been calmed by the coolness of the stream, you can hide yourself under the tall plane tree which drinks with me the waters of this river. As soon as the cool of the evening has tempered

the raging of the flock, by pulling aside the leaves of the neighbouring trees, you will find the golden wool that has adhered to the network of branches through which the sheep have forced their way." Thus did a simple reed show poor Psyche her way to safety. She did not fail to listen attentively to her instructions, but, by observing them all, she easily accomplished the thefts of the flocks of yellow gold, and, filling her lap, she carried them to Venus.

§ But the issue of this second trial had not the desired success : wrinkling her brows and with sneering smile, her tyrant mistress said : " You cannot cheat me : I recognise the hand of your false helper. Now I will give you a test which will prove whether you have such exceeding cleverness and prudence. Do you see the jagged rock that overhangs the summit of yonder mountain, from which a stream flows down in inky waves into the lap of a neighbouring valley, nourishing the Stygian bogs and the hoarse waters of Cocytus ? Seek the earliest source of that stream, take with you

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this little flagon, and fill it full with its icy waters." Thus saying, with many threats she placed in her hand a crystal flagon.

☛ Psyche eagerly hastened to the top of the mountain, thinking to find there an end to her misery in death, and as she neared the rock that had been pointed out to her, she realised the difficulties of her task, and the certainty of her fate. The rock towered over her, jagged and inaccessible, spewing out from its ragged jaws the noisome stream, which, when it had escaped its confines, tumbled and flowed down the mountain side, then, tracing a narrow channel, was lost in the valley beneath. From either side of these rocky jaws two raging dragons, with reared heads, rushed out, unsleeping sentinels, whose vigilance is never tired or cheated. Now even the waters, finding voice, began to warn her : "Go back," they cried. "What are you doing?" "Beware." "Fly, or you will perish." The hopelessness of her task turned Psyche to a stone ; her body was there, but her mind had fled : crushed under the weight of her sorrow,

she was bereft even of the comfort of tears.

§ The sorrows of this innocent soul were not, however, hidden from all-seeing Providence. Suddenly the royal bird of all-powerful Jupiter, the fierce eagle, spread wide his wings and flew down to her. He it was who, guided by Cupid, found and carried off the Phrygian youth to be Jove's cupbearer. He wished to repay the god of Love by bringing help to the troubled bride: and for this reason he had left the ethereal realms, and alighted before the maiden.

“Ah, Innocent! unused to these tasks, do you hope to get even a drop from this fount, as terrible as it is sacred? Do you hope to be able even to reach it? Have you not heard that all the gods, even Jupiter himself, fear the Stygian waters, and that, as you mortals are wont to swear by the divinity of the gods, the gods swear by the majesty of the Styx? But give me your flagon.” He took it from her hand, and soon returned with it filled.



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Psyche aided by the Bird of Jupiter.

For, by rising on his spreading wings, he could fly between the dragons whose open jaws showed their terrible fangs and the darting of their triple tongues. When the flowing waters ordered him with threats to retire and leave them unharmed, he pretended he came by the orders of Venus and on her service: by this ruse he obtained an easier access to their source.

§ Having the flagon full of water, Psyche returned joyfully to Venus: but even this time she could not assuage the anger of the implacable goddess. But threatening her with still heavier and crueller tasks, Venus called to her, smiling spitefully: “You seem to be a witch deeply versed in the infernal arts, since you have so quickly obeyed such difficult commands: but here, my lass, you shall do me one more service. Take this box and carry it to the realms of the dead; right into the gloomy home of Orcus. There you shall present the box to Proserpine: tell her that Venus asks her to send by you a little of her beauty, even if it is only sufficient for a day:

for she has consumed all that she had in nursing her son, who is sick. Lose no time in returning, for I must use it before I take my place in the theatre of the gods.”

§ Then Psyche felt she had reached the very crown of her sorrows, and casting on one side all illusive hopes, she saw that the goddess intended to drive her to destruction. Else, why should she command her to go on foot to Tartarus and the Shades? Without delay she made for the first high tower that she saw, from there intending to throw herself headlong. This, she judged, would be the easiest and most direct way to descend to Tartarus. But suddenly the tower found voice and spoke to her in the following words: “Why, poor wretch, do you seek your death by throwing yourself down from my summit? Why do you succumb without effort before this fresh task and danger? If you unyoke your soul from your body you can, indeed, go to the very bottom of Tartarus: but then you can in no wise return. Listen to me. Lacedaemon, a noble city of Achaia, is situated not far from

here. Seek near there the entrance to Taenarus, hidden in an obscure corner. There is the vent hole of Pluto's dwelling, and through the yawning gap you will see a pathless way: as soon as you have passed through this gap, and have entered on your journey, a straight road will bring you to the kingdom of Orcus. You will not, however, be able to walk right through these shades with empty hands. You must carry in either hand a cake of pearl-barley mixed with honey, and, in your mouth, two pieces of money. When you have gone some way along the road of the dead, you will meet a lame donkey loaded with faggots, and with him a lame driver, who will ask you to hand him some cords as the load has slipped down. But you must pass on without answering a word. Soon you will come to the river of the dead. There Charon holds his sway, demanding toll from all who wish to be ferried over to the opposite bank in his frail bark. For greed thrives among the dead. Charon, Pluto himself, though great even among the gods, gives nothing for nothing, and a poor man dying

must seek money for his fare, for no one who has it not is allowed to breathe out his soul. Give this loathsome old man a piece of money for his fare : but make him take it out of your mouth with his hand. Nor is this all ; as you are passing over these stagnant waters, an old dead man floating in the stream will raise aloft his putrefying hands and beg you to draw him into the boat. But do not give way to a pity that is unlawful. When you have crossed the river and have gone a little distance on your way, some old women spinning a web will ask you to lend them your aid for a little while : but it is not lawful for you even to stretch forth your hand. For these, and many others, are merely traps laid by malevolent Venus in order to get you to drop one of your cakes. Do not think the loss of one of these cakes would be a matter of small moment, for if one is lost the light of day will, for ever after, be refused you. Then you will see an immense dog, endowed with three huge heads and throats, a fierce and dreadful monster who, thundering out deep barks from his throats, frights away the dead, whom, however, he

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cannot harm. He watches always before the threshold of Proserpine's sombre halls, and guards Pluto's silent dwelling. You will easily be able to get past him by throwing him one of your cakes. You will then be able to go direct to Proserpine, who will welcome you kindly, and will invite you to recline on a soft couch, and to partake of a sumptuous feast. Refuse this, and, sitting on the ground, ask for a piece of black bread and eat it. Then tell the purpose of your coming, and, taking what is given you, retrace your steps. Assuage the savage dog by throwing him your remaining cake : after that you will pay the greedy ferryman with your second piece of money, and, having recrossed his river, you will follow the path you came by, and see once more the sky with its glittering band of stars. In all my advice, this one point is the most important : do not wish to open the box you are carrying, or look upon the divine beauty deep hidden in its treasure house." Thus the benevolent tower gave its advice.

Psyche directed her steps without delay to

Taenarus, and, providing herself with the pieces of money and the cakes, she descended the path to the shades. She passed in silence the crippled donkey driver, and gave the ferryman the piece of money ; she hardened her heart against the old man swimming in the stream, and turned a deaf ear to the crafty prayers of the spinners, and, appeasing the dog's rage by the gift of a cake, she entered Proserpine's palace. Refusing the offer of a soft couch and a dainty repast, she seated herself humbly at the feet of the goddess, and having appeased her hunger with black bread, she told the message of Venus. Without delay she obtained the box, filled and closely fastened. With her second cake she sealed the mouth of the snarling dog, and, giving her remaining piece of money to the ferryman, she ran with all haste from the valley of the shades.

When with thankful heart she once more reached the upper world, although in hot haste to end her task, a reckless curiosity filled her mind. "Behold," said she, "here am I, stupidly bearing the source of the goddess' beauty, which, if I take but a little for myself, will render me gracious in the eyes of my



Cupid Awakened by Psyche.

beloved." With these words she opened the box. Lo! it contained no means of beauty, but a death-like and Stygian sleep, which, as soon as the lid was opened, rose and spread its lethargic vapours over every limb, and chained her to the very spot on which she stood. There she fell, bereft of all power of motion, a breathing statue.

☛ But Cupid had now quite recovered from his wound, and could no longer bear his Psyche's absence. He, therefore, escaped by the narrow window of the chamber in which he was imprisoned. On wings, strengthened by his long rest, he flew swiftly down to his Psyche: he recaptured the Sleep, and forced it back into its box, and then with his arrow's harmless point he awakened Psyche. "Once more," he said, "poor child, you come to grief through the same curiosity. Lose no time now in fulfilling my mother's commands: after that I will see to the rest." With these words, her lover took flight, and Psyche carried Proserpine's gift without delay to Venus.

§ In the meanwhile, Cupid, outworn with love, and fearing that his mother's displeasure would send him forthwith to Sobriety, took possession once more of his arms. On swiftest wing he flew up to the topmost sky, and there, before Jupiter himself, he pleaded his cause. Jupiter took his face between his hands, and, drawing it towards his mouth, kissed him, and then addressed him : “ You know well, my son, you have never treated me with the respect that all the other gods have paid me : this intelligence which has formed the great laws of nature, which guides the stars in their journeys, you have distorted by your repeated blows. On earth you have disgraced it by oft-repeated amours, breaking the laws especially promulgated against such intrigues. You have drawn me into adulterous adventures which have compromised my honour and good name ; you have compelled me to hide my majesty under the basest forms, a snake, a fire, a wild beast, a bird, a bull. I must not however, forget the need of gentleness : or that you were brought up under my hand. I will consent to all your requests : but remember to be on guard against
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your rivals, and if there is on earth a maid of surpassing beauty, with her you must repay my bounty.”

☛ When he had spoken thus, he ordered Mercury to convoke an assembly of the gods, and to proclaim that if any of the gods were absent from the roll-call, he would be condemned to a fine of ten thousand crowns. By reason of this threat, the celestial amphitheatre was quickly filled. Seated on his lofty throne great Jupiter began : “ Gods whose names are enrolled in the registers of the Muses, you know full well that this youth, by my side, was reared under my hand. His youthful prime, his boyish outbreaks, make me think it necessary to rein him in. Each day brings me tales of his lechery and riot. I feel that an end must be put to all this, and I have decided to enchain his intemperance with the bonds of matrimony. He has chosen a maid, and has robbed her of her virginity. Her shall he hold, her shall he possess, in Psyche’s embraces shall he for ever find content.” Then, turning to Venus, he said : “ And you, my beloved
81 F daughter

daughter, do not grieve, nor fear, by reason of a marriage with a mortal, that the honour of your great house and name will be dimmed. This marriage shall neither be disproportionate nor irregular." He then ordered Mercury to find Psyche and carry her up to the heavens. When this had been done, he took a cup of ambrosia and said : " Drink, Psyche, and be immortal : never more shall Cupid leave your side, for your marriage shall last throughout eternity."

☞ Immediately a magnificent marriage feast was served. On the seat of honour sat Cupid with Psyche in his arms. With them sat Jupiter and Juno, then the gods in their order. Nectar, which is the wine of the gods, was handed around. His own cupbearer, the young shepherd, served Jupiter, the rest of the gods were waited on by Bacchus, while Vulcan cooked the viands. The Hours crowned the guests with roses, the Graces sprayed them with balsam, the Muses sang with dulcet voice. Apollo sang to his lyre, Venus, to the strains of sweetest music, danced with heavenly grace.

It was so arranged that the Muses formed the choir, while a Satyr played his flute, and a pupil of Pan attuned his pipe. Thus, with all due rites, was Psyche joined to Cupid, and, in due course, the child was born, whom men call Desire.

Here ends the tale of Cupid and Psyche.

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